

Amendments

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently amended) A method for instant messaging on a recipient's computer system, including:

on the recipient's computer system, receiving an instant message (IM) containing content from a sender;

on the recipient's computer system, determining an identification of said sender of said IM from said IM;

sending a request from the recipient's computer system for an animated character associated with said sender to a character server with said identification of said sender, said character server having records of animated characters and senders, each sender associated with a specific animated character;

receiving, in response to said request, in the recipient's computer system from said character server the animated character associated with said sender;

displaying said animated character associated with said sender on the recipient's computer system; and

delivering said content on the recipient's computer system through said animated character;

wherein said IM is received at said recipient's computer system without being relayed by said character server.

Claims 2-8 (Cancelled)

Claim 9 (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 further including:

periodically retrieving advertisement details from a server;

downloading to the recipient's computer system an animated advertising character specified to represent said advertisement;

displaying on the recipient's computer system said animated advertising character specified to represent said advertisement; and

delivering receiving content specified for said advertisement on the recipient's computer system through said animated advertising character.

Claim 10 (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further including:

sending an alert to a server;

receiving in the recipient's computer system a response containing content from said server generated by an artificial intelligence (AI) application;

displaying on the recipient's computer system an animated character associated with said AI application;

and

~~delivering-receiving~~ said content on the recipient's computer system through said animated character associated with said AI application.

Claim 11 (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein said sending an alert includes:

sending a message indicating that a web search is to be performed; and
sending keywords to search in said web search.

Claim 12 (Currently amended) The method of claim 11, wherein said ~~delivering-receiving~~ said content comprises ~~delivering-receiving~~ results of said web search.

Claim 13 (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further including:

associating a sender with a plurality of predefined animated characters; and

allowing the sender to select an animated character from the plurality of predefined animated characters associated with the sender to be displayed on the recipient's computer system in the event the sender sends an IM message to said recipient's computer system.

Claim 14 (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further including:

initially allowing the sender to upload an image for use in creating a record of an animated character to be displayed on the recipient's computer system when said sender sends an IM message to said recipient's computer system.

Claim 15 (Currently amended) A method for instant messaging on a recipient's digital communication system, including:

receiving on the recipient's digital communication system one or more instant messages (IM) containing content from at least one sender, each at least one sender associated with a specific animated character;

forming a queue by creating a dynamic array and inserting an ~~incoming message~~ one or more of said instant messages into said queue;

determining an identification of said at least one sender of one of said IMs

from said IM;

sending a request to a character server with said identification of said sender;

receiving from said character server, in response to said request, an animated character associated with said sender;

controlling the timing of operations of actions in the queue and when required displaying at least one animated character associated with a respective sender; and

delivering said content on the recipient's computer system through-by means of said at least one animated character,

wherein said IMs are received at said recipient's computer system without being relayed by said character server.

Claims 16-18 (Cancelled)

Claim 19 (Currently amended) A method for managing an Instant Messaging system, including:

receiving a request in a character server from a computer system of a recipient of an Instant Message (IM) for an animated character, said request including an identification of a sender of the IM to said recipient's computer system, said character server having records of animated characters and senders, each sender associated with a specific animated character;

querying a database in said character server with said identification to identify the animated character associated with the sender;

receiving said animated character associated with the sender from said database,

and forwarding said animated character from said character server to said recipient's computer system,

wherein said IM is received at said recipient's computer system without being relayed by said character server.

Claims 20-30 (Cancelled)

Claim 31 (Currently amended) An apparatus for instant messaging on a computer system, including:

an IM receiver for receiving at least one Instant Message (IM) from at least one sender;

a sender identification determiner coupled to said IM receiver, for determining the identity of the sender of a received IM;

a server request sender responsive to said sender identification determiner for forwarding the identity of an IM to a character server, said character server having records of animated characters and senders, each sender associated with a specific animated character;

an animated character receiver for receiving an animated character associated with the respective sender from said character server, and

an animated character displayer coupled to said IM receiver and said animated character receiver;

and an animated character content deliverer coupled to said animated character displayer,

wherein said IM is received at said IM receiver without being relayed by said character server.

Claims 32-38 (Cancelled)

Claim 39 (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 31, further including:

an advertisement details periodic retriever; and

an animated character downloader coupled to said advertisement details periodic retriever and to said animated character content deliverer

Claim 40 (Original) The apparatus of claim 31, further including:

a server alert sender;

an artificial intelligence response receiver coupled to said animated character displayer and to said animated character content deliverer.

Claim 41 (Original) The apparatus of claim 40, wherein said server alert sender includes:

a web search message sender; and

a keyword sender coupled to said web search message sender.

Claim 42 (Cancelled)

Claim 43 (Currently amended) An apparatus for managing an Instant Messaging system, including:

an animated character request receiver, for receiving from a computer

system of a recipient of an Instant Message (IM) a request for an animated character, said request including data that identifies the sender of the IM message;

a database query generator coupled to said animated character request receiver for generating a query;

an animated character database information receiver for querying a database having records of animated characters and senders, each sender associated with a specific animated character and obtaining from said database the animated character associated with the sender; and

an animated character database information forwarder coupled to said animated character database information receiver for forwarding said animated character to said recipient's computer system.

wherein said IM is received at said recipient's computer system without being relayed by said animated character request receiver.

Claims 44-49 (Cancelled)

Claim 50 (Currently amended) An apparatus for instant messaging on a computer system, including:

in a recipient's computer system, means for receiving an instant message (IM) containing content from a sender;

in the recipient's computer system, means for determining an identification of said sender of said IM from said IM;

in the recipient's computer system, means for sending a request from the recipient's computer system for an animated character associated with said sender to a character server with said identification of said sender, said character server having records of animated characters and senders, each sender associated with a specific animated character;

in the recipient's computer system, means for receiving, in response to said request, from said character server said animated character associated only with said sender;

in the recipient's computer system, means for displaying said animated character associated with said sender; and

means for delivering said content on the recipient's computer system through said animated character.

wherein said IM is received at said recipient's computer system without being relayed by said character server.

Claims 51-61 (Cancelled)

Claim 62 (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 50, further including:

means for allowing the sender to select from one or more predefined animated characters to be displayed on the recipient's computer system when said sender sends an IM message to said recipient's computer system.

Claim 63 (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 50, further including:

means for allowing the sender to upload an image to be used in creating an animated character to be displayed on the recipient's computer system when said sender sends an IM message to said recipient's computer system.

Claim 64 (Previously presented) An apparatus for managing an Instant Messaging (IM) system, including:

means for receiving from a computer system of a recipient of an Instant Message (IM) a request for an animated character, said request including an identification of a sender of the IM ;

means for querying a database with said identification to identify an animated character associated only with the sender, said database having records of animated characters and senders, each sender associated with a specific animated character;

means for receiving said animated character associated with the sender from said database; and

means for forwarding said animated character to said recipient's computer system.

Claim 65-78 (Cancelled)

Claim 79 (Currently amended) A program storage device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform a method for instant messaging on a computer system, the method including:

receiving on the machine an instant message (IM) containing content from a sender;

determining an identification of said sender of said IM from said IM;

sending a request from the machine to a character server with said identification of said sender, said character server having records of animated characters and senders, each sender associated with a specific animated character;

receiving on the machine from said character server an animated character associated with said sender

displaying on the machine an animated character associated with said sender; and

delivering said content on the machine through said animated character,

wherein said IM is received at said machine without being relayed by said character server.

Claim 80 (Previously presented) A program storage device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform a method for managing an Instant Messaging system, the method including:

receiving a request from a computer system of a recipient of an Instant Message (IM) for an animated character, said request including an identification of a sender of the IM to said recipient's computer system;

querying a database with said identification to identify an animated character associated with the sender, said database having records of animated characters and senders, each sender associated with a specific animated character;

receiving said animated character associated with the sender from said database, and

forwarding said animated character to said recipient's computer system.

Claim 81 (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein delivering said content to the recipient's computer system includes:

converting text from said IM into audio through text-to-speech synthesis; and playing said audio.

Claim 82 (Previously presented) The method of claim 81, wherein delivering said content to the recipient's computer system further includes:

animating said character in synchronization with said playing of said audio.

Claim 83 (Previously presented) The method of claim 82, wherein delivering said content to the recipient's computer system further includes:

detecting an emoticon in said IM; and

animating said character in a way that reflects an emotion of said emoticon.

Claim 84 (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein displaying said

animated character includes displaying said animated character outside of an IM window on a screen.

Claim 85 (Previously presented) The method of claim 84, further including enabling said recipient to move said animated character anywhere on the screen.

Claim 86 (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 50, wherein said means for delivering includes:

means for converting text from said IM into audio through text-to-speech synthesis; and

means for playing said audio.

Claim 87 (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 86, wherein said means for delivering further includes:

means for animating said character in synchronization with said playing of said audio.

Claim 88 (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 86, wherein said means for delivering further includes:

means for detecting an emoticon in said IM; and

means for animating said character in a way that reflects an emotion of said emoticon.

Claim 89 (Previously presented) The apparatus of 50, wherein said means for displaying includes means for displaying said animated character outside of an IM window on a screen.

Claim 90 (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 89, further including means for enabling said recipient to move said animated character anywhere on the screen.